

HOUSE BILL ANALYSIS

HB 2899

Brief Description: Developing a workplace safety plan for state hospitals.

Sponsors: Representatives Conway, Clements, and the Department of Social and Health Services

Hearing: February 2, 2000

Brief Summary of Bill

- Requires state mental hospitals to develop and implement a plan to protect employees from workplace violence.

BACKGROUND:

Most employers in Washington are required to have written accident prevention plans under the Washington Industrial Safety and Health Act. These plans must include a safety orientation program for employees that includes information about how and when to report injuries and unsafe working conditions. In 1998, the Department of Labor and Industries published a nonmandatory guide on workplace violence prevention that included a sample violence prevention program for employers to use in creating a workplace violence prevention program or incorporating such a program into their accident prevention plans.

Legislation enacted in 1999 requires certain hospitals and other health care settings to develop and implement workplace violence prevention plans by July 1, 2000. As enacted, this legislation would have applied to state mental hospitals, but the provision was voided when funding was not provided in the biennial budget.

According to a report published in 1997 by the Department of Labor and Industries, data from 1992 to 1995 show that social services and health services accounted for 51 percent of assault-related claims in the workplace. Psychiatric hospitals had the highest rate of assault of any industry, averaging 90 injuries per 1,000 workers over the four-year period.

SUMMARY OF BILL:

State hospitals for the care of the mentally ill must develop and implement plans and training programs to prevent workplace violence. The departments of Labor and Industries, Health, and Social and Health Services must collaborate with the state hospitals to develop technical assistance and training seminars on plan development and implementation.

Plans for preventing workplace violence. By November 1, 2000, each state hospital must develop, and implement by January 1, 2001, a plan to reasonably prevent and protect employees from workplace violence. The plans must address security considerations related to:

- the physical work environment;
- staffing, including security staffing;
- personnel policies;
- first aid and emergency procedures;
- procedures for reporting violent acts; and
- employee education and training.

Before developing the plan, the state hospital must conduct a security and safety assessment to identify existing or potential hazards for violence and determine appropriate preventive action.

In developing the plan, the state hospital may consider any relevant guidelines issued by government agencies or state hospital accrediting organizations.

Violence prevention training. By January 2001, and regularly thereafter, each state hospital must provide violence prevention training to its affected employees. The training must occur before assignment to a patient unit, and must be in addition to ongoing training determined under the plan. The training must address specific topics, as appropriate to the particular workplace setting and the duties of the employees being trained, including following general and personal safety procedures, dealing with violent behavior, and documenting and reporting incidents. The form of the training may vary, and may include classes, videotapes, brochures, and instruction.

Recordkeeping. Beginning no later than July 2000, each state hospital must keep records of any violent acts committed against employees or patients occurring at the hospital, including specified minimum information. The records must be preserved for five years and must be made available to the Department of Labor and Industries upon request.

Enforcement. State hospitals failing to comply with these requirements may be cited under the Washington Industrial Safety and Health Act.

RULES AUTHORITY: The bill does not contain provisions addressing the rule-making powers of an agency.

FISCAL NOTE: Available.

EFFECTIVE DATE: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.